

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

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A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER II. INFANCY.

AN hour and a half later Mrs. Pybus met her husband at the door, as he was coming in for his mid-day dinner. "I've got a pupil, John," for she had been trying to get pupils.

"Yes?" not eagerly, or curiously, but dreamily. He lived much in the clouds, and needed such a flapper as fortune had given him in his alert little wife.

"Guess who?" as she helped him off with his coat.

"Who," answered for itself by a howl.

"Listen!" exclaimed Mrs. Pybus with her finger to her lips, as if it needed perfect silence to hear a scream which would have been audible in Bedlam.

"A baby!" guessed Mr. Pybus with, for him, extraordinary penetration and readiness.

Mrs. Pybus nodded. "But whose?" she asked again.

He shook his head.

She answered after a pause:

"Poor Mrs. Guard's! Dr. Grice got her brother to give me the care of it."

"Has it been baptised?" asked Mr. Pybus eagerly.

We must explain that Mr. Pybus—the most single and simple minded, and the sincerest of men—had got fast hold of an idea, which would have driven him out of the Church of England if he could have found or founded a more orthodox sect. His idea was that all the wickedness of the world could be prevented by baptism, properly administered. But baptism was duly administered only by total immersion, and only at the moment of birth. Every moment between birth and baptism evil

passions and influences, which floated thick as motes in the sunbeam about us, settled as seeds in the unsecured soil of the soul, and brought forth afterwards the fruit of all the vice and crime in the world. He had got together a vast mass of statistics, proving demonstratively that all the greatest criminals had been either (a) unbaptised, or (b) baptised late, or (c) baptised by mere aspersion. There was no single instance on record—not one—of a great criminal who at the very moment of his birth had been baptised by total immersion. As for the objection that the Quakers (who were unbaptised, and in whom, therefore, these evil passions and influences should have swarmed like mites in a cheese) were above the average in morality, he disposed of it by ascribing all the undetected murders—the great majority—to Quakers. The members of this sect stood by each other more staunchly than the members of any other, and, both from esprit de corps and dread of scandal, they screened the Sicarii who swarmed amongst them. If, then, all the convicted criminals were imperfectly baptised, and all the undetected criminals were unbaptised, was there not at least a strong presumption in favour of his fixed idea that baptism, properly performed, was as absolute a preventive of vice and crime as vaccination, properly performed, was of small-pox?

Hence Mr. Pybus's eager question: "Has it been baptised?"

"No, dear; but everything is ready. The baby is stripped in its cot and the water is warmed," for Mrs. Pybus knew well what her husband's only thought in connection with the new pupil would be.

Mr. Pybus hurried breathless upstairs, and duly administered the rite without the loss of another second. Not till it was

securely over did he take time to ask the momentous question : "How old is it?"

"A month, dear."

Mr. Pybus's face fell.

"Ah, Mary, I wish we had had a child," not querulously, but plaintively.

Mrs. Pybus's face fell, and her eyes filled with wistful tears.

"Never mind, dear," he said consolingly, patting her on the cheek ; "there's Tom Chown."

Tom Chown was a baby left by its dying mother to the Reverend John's care. It had been immersed at the moment of birth, and was at present the sole hope of the world, for in no other case had Mr. Pybus been in time. Poor Mary ! Tom Chown could not quite fill the void in her heart.

"But perhaps it's better as it is," continued Mr. Pybus reflectively ; "I might have been nervous in baptising one of my own."

"I think this has been sent to us, John," looking up with a reverent meaning in her eyes.

"It's a month late," said Mr. Pybus, not irreverently, but despondently.

"Mother has come back," said Mrs. Pybus, to divert his gloomy thoughts. "Mother" was Mr. Pybus's mother, an old lady who was rather a trial, bravely borne, by her daughter-in-law. She was very deaf, and therefore very sensitive and suspicious, and given to taking huff at the shadows of her own dark thoughts. Nor was it an easy thing to disabuse her of a suspicion once lodged in her head, not because she was deaf, but because she wouldn't be deaf. She affected to hear everything that was said in a little louder key than usual, and resented being shouted to as a personal insult. Yet, as she could never be persuaded to use an ear-trumpet, she could hear little without being shouted to. From the little she could hear she drew her own conclusions and was aggrieved by their being upset, in part because she had to be shouted at to be set right, and in part because the supposition that she needed to be set right was itself insulting. Many imaginary grievances therefore festered unhealed in her heart, and drove her away periodically in a huff to stay with her married daughter. As, however, her own daughter was not nearly so forbearing as her daughter-in-law, she always came back soon in much deeper dudgeon than she had left in.

At the mention of his mother Mr. Pybus

hurried off, moved at once by fear and affection. If the old lady knew of his having been a minute in the house without paying his respects to her she would have sulked for a week.

"Well, John, I've come back, you see. I was afraid Mrs. John"—she always called her daughter-in-law "Mrs. John" in speaking of her or to her, "I was afraid Mrs. John might be hurt if I stayed longer. Where is she, John ?"

"She's with the baby, mother," shouted her son.

"You needn't shout so, John. The baby ? What baby ?"

"She's got a baby to take care of. Dr. Grice got her charge of Mrs. Guard's baby ; who was so ill, you know. She's dead."

As her son daren't shout this piece of news, Mrs. Pybus heard only "She's got a baby"—"Dr. Grice"—"So ill," that is, the first words of each sentence, which, of course, were the loudest, and gathered that Mrs. John had been confined. She was stunned for the moment by this amazing news, but recovering herself affected to have been quite prepared for it. She must have been told, she thought, many times over of the approach of this great event, and it wouldn't do to confess that she had never heard a word of it. But how was she to account for her absence at a moment when the presence of a mother-in-law is almost as natural as any of the other pains of childbirth ? She must affect to think it a premature confinement.

"Poor thing, poor thing ! Before her time ; and I away. Dear, dear !"

Her son thought she was referring to Mrs. Guard's early death.

"Suffered terribly," he shouted.

"My poor child ! Why did she let me go away ? Where is she ? She wasn't in her own room, for I've been in."

"Mary ? She's with the baby in the spare room."

Away hurried the old lady followed by her son, who was rather astonished by this sudden impulse of affection. Still more astonished was Mrs. John when her mother-in-law burst in upon her and kissed her effusively, and took from her arms the baby she had been crooning over.

As Mrs. John's childlessness had been a grievance with her mother-in-law, her goodness in having a baby was the more appreciated.

"It's the picture of John," cried the old lady ecstatically, between the kisses she

showered on the baby. "My dear, you should be lying down. You should, indeed. But there's been no one to look after you. Why did you let me go away? Didn't expect it so soon? And I didn't, but one never knows. It's a boy, isn't it? I knew it would be a boy, and the born image of John."

"She thinks it's mine, John; if we don't set her right at once she'll be very angry."

But it wasn't easy to set her right. When Mary tried to shout the explanation to her, the old lady was shocked by her recklessness.

"Not another word, Mrs. John, in your state. You might bring on a fit, screaming like that. You must lie down this moment and let me nurse you. I wonder, John, you let her get up so soon. You are all babies together. Not to write for me even. Take the baby, John, I must look after your wife. It's time some one looked after her, poor thing. Come, my dear, you must lie down this moment; I insist upon it."

"Do come and explain, John," cried Mary, laughing, as she was hurried away in spite of herself. "I shall be kept in bed and fed on caudle for a week."

But John was too much embarrassed by the baby, who loudly expressed its objections to being held by the heels, which, as occurring in the middle of the long clothes, were taken for the centre of gravity by John.

Meanwhile, Mary was carried off, and only escaped being summarily undressed and put to bed by submitting to the compromise of lying down in her clothes. Any attempt at explanation would have been useless, if she could have made any; but she was inarticulate with laughter, which the old lady took for hysterics. She hurried down to the kitchen to compose a posset, the receipt for which had been a secret for generations in the Caffin family—her family—and to which it owed its generations, at least Mrs. Pybus would not have given much for the life of a mother who had not been weaned from caudle on this posset. In the kitchen, however, Mrs. Pybus heard the true state of the case from Jemima, the cook. It took Jemima some time to find out that the neglect, for which she was being so vigorously scolded, was that of her mistress in her confinement, and that this confinement was inferred from the presence of a baby in the house.

"Lor' bless you, mum, it's Mrs. Guard's

bairn," she bellowed into the old lady's ear.

"What?"

"Her that the missus nursed, mum—Mrs. Guard. Her that's dead. It's her baby, mum."

Mrs. Pybus stood stupefied for a moment with a saucepan in her hand; next moment she hurried back upstairs, still in her agitation carrying the saucepan. She either thought, or affected to think, or both—for the mind of man, still more of woman, still more of an old woman, is often inconsequent as a dream—that Mrs. John meant to pass off the baby as her own: to palm off this cheat on her—yes, and on John, too. But any one might impose on John, who had his eyes on the top of his head, and could see nothing on this side of the stars. It was well he had his old mother to look after his interests and keep him from being imposed upon. By his own wife, too! By the time she reached the spare room Mrs. Pybus, by giving the rein to this course of thought, had pretty well persuaded herself of Mrs. John's craft, of John's simplicity, and of her own sagacity.

"John, that child," pointing to it with the saucepan, and pronouncing each word and each syllable of each word staccato, "John, that child is not yours, nor Mrs. John's. It is a su-per-sti-tious child." It was an unfortunate Malapropism for "supposititious," for she lost a syllable by the exchange, and a syllable, as she delivered it, spoke volumes.

"I hope not, mother," shouted John, smiling pleasantly. This answer made the old lady sure of her ground. It was plain that John had been taken in.

"John," drawing a step nearer, to emphasise each word by a stroke of the saucepan on his arm, "it's a cheat, it's not a Pybus; it's Mrs. Guard's baby!" drawing back her head to see the full effect of this thunderstroke.

"So I told you, mother," shouted John.

"Who told me? Jemima told me," triumphantly.

"I told you so myself, mother," louder but with perfect placidity.

"You—you told me," gasped the old lady, and then pulled herself up. It had at last occurred to her that she must have misunderstood her son; but to confess to such a misunderstanding would have been to confess to extreme deafness, which would have been to give up the battle of her life. On this point, then, she was discreetly

silent, and turned, after her manner, from her son, who, as the king, could do no wrong, upon Mrs. John, his prime minister, who could do nothing else.

"To make a mockery of it! To make a mockery of it!" holding up shocked hands, or at least a shocked hand and saucépan; "to lie down on the bed before my very eyes and ask for the posset!" It was no use for Mrs. John to attempt an explanation, the old lady judiciously waved it away. "Don't ask my pardon, Mrs. John. You've not offended me." In proof of which she maintained a sullen silence till bed-time, and then broke it only by still more vindictive speech. Just before her usual hour for retiring she rose solemnly, stalked from the room, and, after a few minutes absence, returned with a yellow paper in her hand, which Mrs. John took for her will. But it was something much more awful. Holding it in the candle till it was well in flames, and then dropping it into the grate, she said simply but fatefully: "It is the Coffin receipt!" It was the receipt for the posset!

Neither Mr. Pybus's panacea for the world's wickedness, nor his mother's posset, will seem to the reader of importance enough to find a place in this history; but they owe their place in it not so much to their intrinsic importance as to their bearing upon the happiness of Master Archibald Guard.

When, in after years, that young gentleman transgressed, and was brought up by the inexorable old lady for sentence to Mr. Pybus, his kindly guardian would rouse himself from his dreams to shake his head and say only, "A month late—a month late," and not merely condone the offence, but condole with the child for his misfortune in having committed it.

On the other hand, and as a set-off against this indulgence, there were the rigours of old Mrs. Pybus's discipline. For the old lady neither forgot nor forgave the mistake she had made about the baby, and she revenged herself for it on Mrs. John; at first by importuning her son to be rid of the child, then by ignoring its existence, and then, finding that was just what Mrs. John wanted, by interfering at every turn in everything that concerned it. Mrs. John never had a child, what therefore could she know about washing, dressing, or feeding it? Poor Mrs. John had a trying time of it, and the baby also. The wretched creature was sometimes washed and dressed twice over in a morning, first by Mrs.

John, and then a revised and corrected edition (with illustrations) by Mrs. Pybus. And the child had no chance against the old lady. Every creature, according to Horace, has been supplied by nature with weapons of offence and defence—the ox with his horn, the horse with its hoof, etc. And a baby is in all other ways so helpless that Nature has to indemnify it with one weapon of extraordinary power of offence and defence—its howl. But there was no piercing Mrs. Pybus with this weapon. It was blunted before it got through the triple brass of her deafness, and only tickled her dreamily, or at most was mistaken for a crow of ecstasy. Things came to a crisis at last, however.

One day Mrs. John was hurried up by howls to the nursery, to find the old lady holding the naked baby face down over a tub with one hand, and with the other pouring upon it a stream of scalding water. As the child kicked and yelled in agony, Mrs. Pybus lavished upon it a world of endearments, taking its screams for crows and its kicks for frantic applause.

"Did it like its bath then? Yes, it did—it did. Um bless it. It was a dood little duckums, it was—a dood little, 'ittle, kicksey, wicksey duckums."

Meanwhile "duckums" was being flayed alive to this soft music, like Marsyas under the hands of the tuneful Apollo.

Mrs. John, without the waste of a word, snatched the child from its unconscious tormentor, and altogether forgetting for the moment her mother-in-law, set about soothing the infant and its wounds.

The old lady sat speechless, motionless, appalled. This was revolution. It was. The long-suffering Mrs. John appealed to her husband, as to a modern Solomon, to decide whose the baby was to be. She found him in the study, as usual, striking the stars with his lofty head. John tried to gather his scattered thoughts to a focus to listen to Mary's plaintive appeal. It appeared, as well as he could make out, that between his wife and his mother the wretched baby was being washed away, like a sea cliff. What was to be done? After deep meditation he thought he saw his way out from between Scylla and Charybdis.

"Couldn't Betty wash it?"

Betty was the laundress. He seemed to have a confused idea that the baby might be put into the basket with the other soiled things on a Monday, go through the machine, perhaps, and be brought back on

Wednesday morning white and glistening.

"Nonsense, dear; a baby isn't washed like a handkerchief."

"No?" dreamily, for he had relapsed into his dreams.

"John, do ask your mother to leave the child to someone who can hear it cry."

"But what do you want to hear it cry for?" asked John, in utter perplexity.

In truth, he had suffered horribly from the howls of the tormented infant, and was aghast at the notion of any sane creature enjoying them. Did the wife of his bosom, like a girl with a squeaking doll, delight to hear it bellow?

"Besides," he added feelingly, "you can hear it cry all over the house."

It seemed greedy to want more of it than could be heard in the study.

"I don't like to hear it cry, you goose," cried Mary, laughing in spite of herself; "but I don't like it to cry without being heard. You'll have it boiled some day."

"Boiled!" exclaimed the bewildered John.

What Thystesian feast was this that was being prepared for him? In fact, he hadn't heard half her story.

"You haven't been listening to a single word I said. Now, do wake up and listen," taking hold of the lapels of his coat, and giving him thereby a playful shake. Mary then proceeded to put to him as pathetically as possible his mother's parboiling of the baby to a playful accompaniment of endearments, with the utterly unexpected result of a roar of laughter.

John was an eccentric man in most things, but most of all in his sense of humour. Something in which others could see no joke at all would delight him hugely, and at intervals for weeks together; while for his life he couldn't see the fun of other flashes of merriment that set the table on a roar. Now, at his wife's pathetic tale, he roared, and shook, and cried with laughter, walking, or rather stamping, up and down the room to give fuller vent to his hysterical delight.

Mary, however, whose motherly heart was more impressed by the pathetic than the ludicrous aspect of the scene, looked so vexed at his unsympathetic reception of her story, that he was forced to make his peace by a promise to ask his mother not to interfere henceforth in the management of the infant. It was a rash promise and

a perilous undertaking, but it was undertaken, and must be fulfilled.

He came upon the old lady when she was in her best cap and temper, and opened the business most diplomatically, as he thought, by shouting:

"Mary thinks you've at last taught her how to nurse the baby, mother."

Of course the old lady, always on the look-out for offence, understood him to make an ironical reference to her misadventure of the morning. And, indeed, the misadventure of the morning coming into his mind at the moment, set him laughing in spite of himself. Her own son! She burst into tears, to the extreme perplexity and distress of her son, who thought that she must have mistaken his words as usual.

"My dear mother, I only said that Mary thought you've done quite enough for the child now."

This revised version of his diplomatic beginning didn't mend matters, as may be supposed.

"Thank you, John, thank you; you needn't say anything more. There is the cab; perhaps Mrs. John wouldn't think it too much to allow Hannah to order it—not just this moment. I shall take the liberty to go upstairs to put my bonnet on, and there are one or two things that are mine in this house which I should like to pack up with your kind permission. I shall not be many minutes," making with a majestic step for the door, when she turned to add: "Not a kicking horse this time, if you please." On her last Hegira, it seems, a brute of this kind had been engaged and credited to the thoughtful malice of Mrs. John, who must have instructed Hannah to make special enquiry for a kicking horse at the cabstand.

John was in great trouble, but Mary reassured him.

"She has only just left Margaret's, dear," which, being interpreted, meant that "the wounds received from Goneril are too raw for her to leave Regan at present." For Margaret was the old lady's own daughter and only other refuge, from whose house she had just been shot by an explosion.

Mary was right. On following the old lady to her room to soothe and soften her, she found her more placable than usual. She yielded, in fact, so far as to compound the matter by a week's sulk. A sulk with her was something of the nature of those

retreats now in vogue among the clergy. She not only never spoke and rejected all table delicacies during this Ramadan, but she would be humbly helped last to everything, and be ranked last everywhere and always—while each evening she would read rather ostentatiously, “The Order for the Visitation of the Sick.”

SHILLINGBURY SKETCHES.

OUR MAIDEN LADY.

THERE were many other ladies in Shillingbury, besides Miss Dalgairns, who might have laid claim to be limned as the type of the middle-aged spinster. Many of them had tongues just as long, and tempers just as short, as hers. Some of them looked the part as perfectly as, or even more perfectly than she did; and two or three perhaps might have been found who were censors of manners as severe as she was. I admit that I might easily have put my finger upon other ladies who united in their own persons, more completely than Miss Dalgairns did, all the various attributes which, according to contemporary verdict, serve to differentiate the species “old maid” from the residue of the human race, but certainly none of these would have exhibited a personality so strong. If the reader should find out that my maiden lady differs over much from the accepted type, he must put it down to a preference on my part for a strong personality to work upon, and not to a dearth of the accepted type in Shillingbury.

When I first saw Miss Dalgairns she was drawing on towards “forty year,” and I then was, and still am, quite unable to picture to myself what her youth could have been like. Indeed, I have more than once doubted whether she ever could have been a girl at all—that is, according to the common acceptation of the term—in spite of a portrait of her, taken apparently when she was about fourteen, which used to hang in the back parlour. In this she was represented with a hoop in her right hand, and a lap-dog under her left arm, and I remember I used always to find it easier to think of her as chastising the lap-dog than as trundling the hoop.

The Miss Dalgairns of my youth was tall and robust in person, and not uncomely in feature, but there was something in her voice and manner especially uninviting of confidence. She was one of those people who are born to command

rather than to win. Before one had been ten minutes in her presence one would understand that she liked to have her own way, and that, however warmly she might advocate the right of private judgment in a general or theological sense, she was by no means disposed to admit your own particular right to think for yourself. She could barely be civil to anyone who might venture to set up any show of opposition to her own opinions. I have a humiliating remembrance of having lost my temper many a time in wordy war with her. I am not by nature a litigious person. I do not blaze up in hot wrath the moment I hear any pet position of my own assailed; but there was a dogmatic aggressiveness in Miss Dalgairns’s utterances which was to me like the red rag to the bull. She had a way of showing her dissent, which told you plainly she was quite satisfied that nobody but a born fool would ever hold the opinion you had just expressed, and, even when you might find yourself agreeing with her that a certain evil ought to be remedied, you would most likely be told that the method by which you proposed to work was something as bad as or worse than the evil which you were attacking. She had a sharp tongue and a ready wit, and I have known superior persons come out of an argument with her not exactly triumphant, though they may have had on their side the balance of reason.

I suppose my sketch of a maiden lady will be set down as untrue to nature in the highest degree unless I speak of Miss Dalgairns as a busybody. Perhaps she was a little over busy at times, but I am bound to say that her business invariably took a practical and sometimes a very useful turn. She had nearly always a protégé of some kind in hand, in the shape of some astonishing genius in the workhouse school—some girl with an abnormal aptitude for plain sewing, or some boy who was bound to make his way in the world if only he could be apprenticed to a carpenter. For any such as these she would work with a will, vexing the souls of the guardians of the poor with requests which they were utterly powerless to grant; but somehow or other her percentage of failures was large. Perhaps the little boys objected to be seized by the scruff of the neck and cast headlong into the tide which led on to fortune; and the little girls may have resented being dragged by the hair of their heads along the pathway of virtue. Anyhow a goodly number of her swans did turn out to be merely

geese, and some of her pet lambs, on coming to maturity, clothed themselves in very black fleeces.

Miss Dalgairens lived in a large red-brick house in High Street. Her father, a man who had made his money in India, had ended his days there; and there our Miss Dalgairens, the sole survivor of a large family, now managed to keep house with what remained of the family fortunes. The old people were dead before I was born; and in my boyhood the family consisted of Miss Dalgairens, who ruled the household with a rod of iron, four other sisters, all of mild unaggressive temperament, and little Cuthbert, the child of his parents' old age, a pretty boy some five-and-twenty years younger than his eldest sister.

The house must have been rather a dreary one for the bright, lively child. The sisters did not entertain, and all the visiting that went on was the ordinary calling and tea-drinking of English country life. Cuthbert was about two years younger than myself, and during my holidays I used to carry him off as a playfellow as often as I could persuade Miss Dalgairens to give her consent, but, even then, I noticed that she never liked the boy to go out of her sight. Every time Cuthbert spent the day with me I was bound afresh by the most solemn promises not to go within sight of the river, nor to allow Cuthbert to be out after sunset, nor to go wandering about Pudsey Heath, as people said I was wont to do. I always walked home with him in the evening, and when his sister would take him in her arms to welcome him, there would come over her face an expression which was almost one of happiness. Very few people, I fancy, ever saw Miss Dalgairens look thoroughly happy, but at these moments she would come the nearest to it.

The house which the Dalgairens family inhabited was furnished just as in the father's lifetime; and the sisters, all of them, wore the mourning-black, very little modified, which they had put on at his death. It is quite certain that some of the younger ones longed to lay aside their sombre weeds, and dress once more in the fashion of the day. It must have been a sore trial to them to walk down the High Street when Mr. Lomas, our leading linen-draper, was displaying his spring novelties, knowing that for them the pink muslins and blue ribbons were displayed in vain. They, poor girls, loved clothes as well as the majority of their sex—clothes, that is, which were not black; but not one of them

would have dared to put on so much as a coloured bow unless their eldest sister should have signified her approval. They were a weakly, ailing lot, these younger sisters, and they all of them passed to their rest beneath the elms in our churchyard in Miss Dalgairens's lifetime. She tended and nursed them well with a hard uncompromising regimen. They all died in decline, and the best of nursing and doctoring would hardly have done more than prolong their lives a month or so. This she gave them according to her lights, and so far she did her duty; but perhaps in every case the last few weeks would have been less wearisome had the discipline been relaxed a little, and the medicine and the beef-tea been administered with a less distressing punctuality.

Mr. Dalgairens had left his estate divided into seven shares, one for each of the girls, and two for Cuthbert. The girls were all of full age when he died, but Cuthbert was a child, and was left under the guardianship of his eldest sister, until he should attain his majority. Cuthbert Dalgairens, both as a boy and as a young man, was certainly one of the most beautiful and fascinating of the human race. His hair was like rippling gold, too lovely for a boy's hair, and his eyes of that rare violet shade which makes the softest brown look commonplace by comparison. His features were perfect in modelling, beautiful in repose; but much more beautiful when the smile, which came so readily over them, lighted and transfigured them. His voice was low and melodious, and, even as a boy, he had a tact and a delicacy about him which taught him always to say and do the right thing at the right time. Often when I have seen him walking in the midst of the sombre group of young old women, with his laughing face and bright golden hair, he has seemed to me more like a fairy changeling than a child of the house.

Except for the boundless, all-absorbing love she bore this child, Miss Dalgairens had no tie of sympathy to this miserable world—the world she abused so constantly. Though she had never said so, it was an accepted fact that she rose up and lay down, spoke, worked, and thought for this boy's sake alone; and she did her best to make her sisters do likewise. Everything which might by the widest use of the term have been called a luxury, was suppressed in the household. The dresses were worn threadbare; the fires were begun late in

the autumn, and left off early in the spring; and the table was regulated by Spartan maxims of simplicity, in order that a fund might be made to keep Cuthbert at school and at college in a manner worthy of his deserts.

I well remember that, for more than a year before Cuthbert left the family-roof, Miss Dalgairns could think or talk of nothing else except the merits of this and the demerits of that educational establishment. I believe she had the past history, and the present circumstances, of every school in the United Kingdom at her finger-ends, and could have answered, offhand, any question about any one of them. Of course she found a perfect school at last—these diligent seekers always do—and, when once her choice had been made, woe betide the unlucky one who might have ventured to hint in her presence that the college here, and the grammar-school there, were well-spoken of. Well-spoken of, forsooth! She knew all about them. People were so criminally careless where they sent their children; but it would not be her fault if the whole country round did not know that the man who taught German at the college was a Jew by faith as well as by race; and that the head-master of the grammar-school had once signed a petition in favour of the abolition of religious tests. How could one expect that the moral and religious welfare of the boys should be looked after in such places as these? Moral and religious training was, in her opinion, the mainstay of education, and this, she was glad to say, was the line Dr. Parling took in dealing with the youths committed to his charge.

Dr. Parling's school was an excellent specimen of the genteel private school conducted, according to the prospectus, "upon the lines of our great public schools." Dr. Parling most likely would have called his connection aristocratic; but I doubt whether it could have been rated with justice higher than "genteel." Dr. Parling expected that his pupils should always be well-dressed; the correctest Eton costume was insisted on, and he fed them well if he taught them little. Cuthbert howled a good deal when he first left home, in anticipation of the legendary terrors of school; but afterwards he always went back cheerfully enough. Miss Dalgairns, indeed, was a little hurt that there was no repetition of the weeping and wailing of the first separation. The food was very good; there were long play-hours and plenty of com-

panions to play with; he was not bothered with work, nor were the devotional exercises nearly as severe as at home, in spite of Dr. Parling's expressed opinions as to the "mainstay of education." Cuthbert, however, said nothing on this last-named point to his eldest sister.

He remained under Dr. Parling's care all through his school-days. The last year Miss Dalgairns paid a large extra fee for special preparation for his matriculation at Oxford, and after this momentous event there was a house-to-house visitation in Shillingbury by Miss Dalgairns to carry round the news that Cuthbert, after passing his examination with distinction, had been admitted as a commoner at Carfax College—one of the most select of the colleges in Oxford.

Cuthbert seemingly entered with great zest into the pleasures of Oxford life, but he did not display a corresponding alacrity in getting through "smalls." Everybody knows how bad the climate of Oxford is, and, after a little, Miss Dalgairns, with an air more apologetic than was usual with her, informed us that for one term the poor boy had been quite incapacitated from work by the fogs and damp.

One Easter he did not come down at all. He wrote that he could work so much better in Oxford than he could at home, and that he had made up his mind to get through "smalls" at once, and begin to read for honours; but it was whispered abroad in Shillingbury that he had been seen late at night about the Haymarket with a lot of lively youths during this vacation, which had been destined for studious seclusion, and it was certain that his next attempt to get through his examination was just as futile as the former ones had been.

Soon after this, the gloom began to gather deeper and deeper upon Miss Dalgairns's brow, and she hardly ever alluded to Cuthbert in any terms, much less to speak of the distinguished future we had heard so much about when he first went up to Carfax. The housekeeping became more meagre than ever, and the little pony-car which the sisters had kept was got rid of. Then it was rumoured that the authorities of Carfax had requested Cuthbert to take his name off the books, as that distinguished society did not approve of young gentlemen who were so easy-going in the matter of examinations; and finally, at the end of one long vacation, Cuthbert lingered on at Shillingbury, and made no movement at all towards his

alma mater. Then it was known for the first time that he had left Oxford, without taking a degree.

For six months or so he hung about the place, making some pretence of reading for his final school ; but his reading was more in the way of French fiction than the classics of Greece and Rome. In spite of his shortcomings, he had grown up into as pleasant a young fellow as one could wish to see—quite as handsome as a man as he had been as a boy, modest and restrained, and with no visible taint of the bad atmosphere in which, it was to be feared, he had lived while at Oxford. The old home and everything about it was distasteful to him, and he had tact enough to see that his presence made his sisters uncomfortable ; so he spent his time anywhere rather than in their society. Where he spent the whole of it no one knew, but it was certain that he went a good deal to The Black Bull.

All this was naturally a bitter humiliation for Miss Dalgairns, but worse remained behind. There was a pretty little farm lying just outside Shillingbury, which Mr. Dalgairns had bought out of his savings, and it had been the amusement of his latter days to make it as perfect as a little farm could be. The homestead was compact and neat, and all the fields well drained and fenced, and it had been the old man's custom, every Sunday afternoon, to walk out to the farm, nominally to have a word with Peter Dack, the tenant, but really, I believe, to gladden his eyes by the sight of his nice little bit of property, his gratification being in no way diminished by knowing that the place was a veritable Naboth's vineyard to Squire Winsor, whose lands closed round it on every side.

One market-day in Shillingbury there was a whisper that Dack's farm would be for sale before long, but nobody exactly believed the report till an auctioneer's bill, placarded on the walls and hoardings, proclaimed the fact without dispute. It was knocked down to Squire Winsor's agent, as everyone knew it would be ; and everyone, just as confidently, affirmed that the proceeds of the sale would all be swallowed up in paying Master Cuthbert's Oxford debts. Through some provision in the father's will, the real property had been left to the children collectively, and could only be alienated under their joint signatures. Cuthbert was now of age, so there was no difficulty on that score. The whole family attended one day at Lawyer Merridew's office ; the deeds were signed,

and Miss Dalgairns carried away in her hand-bag the purchase-money, all in Bank of England notes.

This transaction took place on Tuesday, and as the branch office of Lumley's Bank was only open on market-day, Friday, Miss Dalgairns was forced to keep the money in as safe a place as she could find over the intervening time. The next Friday morning came, and of all the market-days that ever shone upon Shillingbury, that is the one I remember best. The town was convulsed with the rumour that during the night Miss Dalgairns's house had been broken into, the iron chest in her bedroom opened, and every farthing of the purchase-money of Dack's farm stolen. Of course there was a great commotion. A burglary had not been known in Shillingbury within the memory of man, and, besides this, an undeniable glamour of mystery was spread over the whole affair. The notes had been stolen from Miss Dalgairns's bedroom, and she had heard no sound ; she had indeed slept more heavily than usual that night ; the chest had been opened by a key, which showed that the thief must have had prior access to the house ; none of the other sisters had heard the least noise. Cuthbert alone, of all the household, had been disturbed about two o'clock by something which sounded like the creaking of a door ; but he thought nothing of it, as the old house was full of noises, and turned over and went to sleep again.

We had visits from inspectors of police more or less intelligent, and detectives from London were fabled to have visited the town under strange disguises, but they all of them came in vain. No glimmer of light was thrown upon this mystery by anything they did. About a fortnight after the robbery Cuthbert left the town to spend six months in France. He had resolved to enter upon a mercantile career, and it was most important that he should master at least one modern language. A friend of his was gone to live in a quiet French family at Havre with this object, and Cuthbert thought that he himself could not do better than follow this example. He was ashamed when he looked back upon his school and college days, and saw how much time he had wasted. He had done with trifling now, and meant to see what a spell of steady work would do.

A month passed, and the sisters received but one letter from the reformed prodigal,

and this letter he had entrusted to a friend who was going to England to post in London, so as to save the extra stamps. He was getting on famously with his studies, and was becoming economical, if not miserly. According to the most approved maxims, he was beginning to look after the pence even in the matter of postage. He also sent Miss Dalgairns the recipe for the carrot-soup, very palatable and very satisfying, with which Madame Dupuis frequently regaled her boarders. The letter all through was bright and hopeful, and the day of its coming was the least sombre that had dawned upon the home of the sisters for some time.

One Sunday morning, some weeks after this, Lawyer Merridew accosted me as I was walking home from church, and asked me if I could give him a few minutes of my time. We went into his office, and then he handed me the *Times* of the day before, and bade me read a paragraph which he pointed out to me. It was the report of a case before a bench of magistrates somewhere in Berkshire, in which Cuthbert Dalgairns was charged with having caused the death of one Henry Dawson. The paper almost fell from my hands as I read the names, and my dismay did not diminish as I read on. The report went on to state that Dalgairns had been giving a dinner to a party from London at The Carp, a noted riverside hostelry, and that, after the wine had gone round pretty freely, a quarrel had arisen between him and Dawson, on account of certain attentions paid by the latter to a Mdlle. Stephanie, a lady formerly attached to the ballet at the Italian opera, in whose honour the banquet had apparently been given. Dalgairns, as the host of the day, resented this. High words arose, and a hasty blow led to a struggle in which Dawson, who was half drunk, fell into the river, and before any succour could be given, was carried over the adjoining lasher and never seen alive again. When I had finished reading the report, I looked up in Mr. Merridew's face, and as our eyes met, I felt sure that we were both of us debating the same question. Alas! it was one which did not require very long debate. By the light of what I had just read, the mystery of the stolen money became clear enough, and before many days had passed, it had ceased to be a mystery at all as far as Shillingbury was concerned. This was Cuthbert's preparation for a mercantile career. This was the quiet French family with whom he was supposed to be domi-

ciled. The shock I felt at learning the full extent of the wretched fellow's folly and crime was a very terrible one; but it was not half so terrible as the thought of the utter ruin and destruction of his sister's life, when she should learn the whole of the dreadful truth.

No one saw Miss Dalgairns for many weeks after this. At this time one of the younger sisters sickened and died, and when the poor girl had taken her leave of a world which must have been for her a terribly gloomy one, Miss Dalgairns showed herself again with the impress of awful sorrow—of sorrow ten times more blasting than any which could have come from her sister's death—upon her face, which seemed to have grown twenty years older in the last ten weeks. She, poor woman, had staked the whole wealth of her affection on one throw, and turned the full stream of her human sympathy upon one object. Now she had to feel the torments which are the portion of those who do this and lose. With such as these there is no second chance, and the torn heart-strings will not heal again as they do in people who can roar out over their griefs as loudly as Polyphemus did for his stricken eye. The grief that fell upon Miss Dalgairns was indeed like a refiner's fire, but it was a test such as every nature is not able to sustain. The chastening discipline of grief is by no means the universal panacea, as certain armchair novelists and retailers of cheap consolation are prone to declare. There is no rule to predict how it will affect any particular nature; but I think all who knew Miss Dalgairns expected to find her strong under her sorrow and resolute to hide her scars. And so she was. No one ever heard her speak of Cuthbert after that fatal day, but no one could ever be in her presence for ten minutes without finding out that with her the fruit of life had proved to be Dead Sea apples, and that the ashes were very bitter indeed. Any one meeting her casually, and never getting a glimpse behind the mask of uncompromising severity which she held up before her true self, would be prone to believe that she had adopted in its entirety the creed of Timon. The burthen of her discourse was ever that men were as bad as they could be by nature, and that in spite of the boasted triumphs of civilisation, they were growing worse year by year. Everything was wrong; the times were hideously out of joint; and I once heard her say that if she had not been

possessed of a firm belief that, in another world, all wrongs would be redressed and all crooked things made straight, she would have gone mad.

In my childhood I always had a certain dread of her, and this did not entirely vanish when I, a man, and she an old woman, became very good friends; for we were good friends, in spite of our constant wordy battles. Our discussions very often took a theological turn, and on this field Miss Dalgairns did not mince words in dealing with those who might differ from her. If she found you straying an inch on either side of the straight path, she would put you down either as a crypto-Roman or a would-be atheist. Her creed, I must say, was a puzzle to me, and I am confident that all the religious doubt I ever felt sprang from my meditations on some of the propositions which I had heard her lay down, as the only safe foundations of religious belief. Hers was a name of terror to the successive curates who came amongst us. I once was present when one of them was put through his facings on the occasion of a first call—he did not call a second time. How I laughed in my sleeve to watch the unhappy youth fall into trap after trap, and finally stand convicted of heresies so terrible that I must forbear to describe them for want of adequate terms!

But, in spite of her gloomy creed and tart speech, there was in Miss Dalgairns's nature a fountain of tenderness and benevolence which the sorrow of her life had unsealed. Though a great black cloud, never to lift again, had fallen across her heaven, "her hand was swifter unto good" in those latter days than ever before, and the good—done for the most part by stealth—came as the gift of a heart which had known all the pangs it now yearned to relieve. When Mr. Yates, the manager of a local bank, was dismissed, on account of certain irregularities in his accounts, she gave the wife and children a home until Yates, who had gone to America, had found employment and could send for them. When John Greenwood's girl, Peggy, left her situation in disgrace, and was turned out into the street by her father, who swore he would rather let her die in the gutter than shelter her and her shame beneath his roof, Miss Dalgairns took the girl off to London, procured her admission to a benevolent institution, and never lost sight of her till she had placed her, grateful and

penitent, in a fair way of earning an honest living.

These instances are only two out of many. Miss Dalgairns had schooled herself to believe that the bright pleasant things of life were not for her, but she did not on this account sit down and waste her days in selfish nursing of her own griefs. Poor as she was in purse, no deserving case of suffering ever pleaded in vain. She gave of her poverty, and she was, besides, always ready to give her service and sympathy—a form of charity calling for much more self-denial than the drawing of "a little cheque" on a healthy banking account. At the great final audit, when all the balances are struck, hers, perchance, will show a better figure than that of many a philanthropist whose name now stands on charity-lists with lordly sums written opposite.

LIFE LILIES.

AN ALLEGORY.

I WANDERED down Life's garden,
In the flush of a golden day,
The flowers and thorns grew thickly
In the spot where I chanced to stray.
I went to choose me a flower
For life, for weal or for woe ;
On, on I went, till I stayed me
By the spot where the lilies grow.
"Yes, I will carry a lily,"
I said in my manhood's pride,
"A bloodless, thornless lily,
Shall be my flower !" I cried.
I stretched my hands out quickly
To where the pale blossoms grew.
Was it the air that shivered ?
Was it a wind that blew ?
Was it my hands that scorched them ?
As I touched the blossoms fair,
They broke and scattered their petals
On the sunny noon tide air.
Then I saw a great, bright angel
With opal-coloured wings,
Where the light flashed in the feathers
In golden glimmerings.
He said, "Thou hast sinned and suffered ;
Lilies are not for thee,
They are all for the little children,
Emblems of purity."
"Shall I never carry a lily ?
Never ?" I bitterly cried.
With his great eyes full of pity,
The heavenly one replied :
"When the heat of the day is over ;
When the goal is won," he said,
"Ah, then I lay God's lilies
In the hands of the stainless dead !"

NEIGHBOURS.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

THE following morning Dorothy met her neighbour on the beach. Mr. Neeld had evidently been bathing, but even this circumstance, coupled with the fact that

he had not yet breakfasted, was powerless to rob him of a certain splendid air of being at home in a multifarious and perplexing world. He looked even more indolent this morning than under the casino gas-lights. It is, however, the mysterious privilege of powerful men to be indolent, and Mr. Neeld seemed to derive a fair amount of enjoyment from the exercise of this particular privilege. His strong frame was clothed in a light suit of the loosest possible clothes, and his manner, although sufficiently deferential and courteous to women, made the least possible concessions to formality.

After a few civil enquiries after their mutual friend, Mrs. Finnis, Mr. Neeld asked if he might be allowed to sit down near Miss Macquorn. Having obtained permission, he sank down easily on the beach at her feet, and began lazily throwing stones into the sea. Neither of them spoke, and by-and-by Dorothy began to experience an inward resentment at the luxurious ease of this gentleman beside her, who did not feel it incumbent on himself to "make conversation" in the ordinary way; and her resentment was not lessened by the recollection that Mr. Neeld had not been backward in this particular when lounging on the terrace on the previous evening.

The stone-throwing in the meantime went on. Mr. Neeld seemed to enjoy this innocent pastime with the calm and undisturbed delight of an inveterate idler.

"But you don't throw stones," he said at last, slowly. He belonged to the race of gentlemen who never hurry themselves in anything. "What is there to do at St. Sulpice if you don't throw stones?"

"Well, it had never occurred to me in that light," answered Dorothy, amused in spite of herself. "I have found plenty of things to do here."

"Have you, really?" asked Neeld with a faint show of interest. "There are some friends of mine who have been here about a week, and they tell me that they have positively found nothing to do yet. Now, what I like about the place is that, as far as I can see, there is nothing to do, and one isn't expected to do anything—which is in itself a great point."

"I don't know that I care very much about what people expect," said Dorothy thoughtfully, who was apt to be carried away in conversation by what words suggested; "but one at least expects something of oneself."

"My dear young lady, you have there an elaborate plan for disappointing yourself," returned Neeld. "The fact is, there isn't a person in the universe who is not disappointing in some way, and vivisecting oneself isn't a cheerful business at any time. One had best leave it alone."

"You think we could get over being disappointed in our friends, but that we should take ourselves more to heart?" asked the girl.

"Ye—es, we should take ourselves more to heart," repeated Mr. Neeld, smiling at the quaint earnestness of his companion, "so we take the wise precaution to expect nothing."

"I think to arrive at that state of mind is sadder than any disappointment," cried Dorothy, springing up. "The very fact of being disappointed implies that we hope."

"Just as nearly every hope implies disappointment," returned Hawley Neeld with something like a yawn, as he rose and stretched his well-developed arms. "By Jove!" he added with quickened interest, on observing the empty beach and the small hand of the clock on the casino. "Do you see the time, Miss Macquorn? One hopes they won't have eaten up all the déjeuner."

On the following day, as Dorothy was starting with her paint-box and folding easel for a farmhouse some few miles distant, she again saw her neighbour. He was lounging, in his usual imperturbable manner, in the strong sunlight, against the wall of his small cottage-garden. His hat was tilted over his eyes, while clouds of pale-blue smoke from a well-coloured meerschaum rose gently in the warm, still air.

Hawley Neeld removed his hat and laid down his pipe on recognising Dorothy, and then advanced placidly down the narrow gravel path.

"You paint?" he asked tersely, by way of greeting, in his low-toned voice.

"Yes, I try to. I hope to make something of this," answered Dorothy in her energetic way. "I wonder if you know the farmhouse I am doing. Of course I have only just begun," she went on, as she turned up her canvas to be inspected.

"I don't think I have been there," he said, without further comment on the painting; "but, if you will allow me to accompany you, I should like to see the place."

"It's more than two miles off," said Dorothy in a hesitating way.

"I think I might manage it with an effort," he returned with one of his curious half-smiles, as he gently took the easel and paint-box from Dorothy's hands.

Needl proved himself an amusing companion on the road, and Dorothy was by no means inclined to quarrel with her neighbour's silence when she set up her easel and began to work.

Dorothy's general demands for the picturesque were amply answered by her surroundings that day. No ugly scientific appliances marred the beauties of this tumble-down, sleepy-looking farmyard; Nature, so to speak, in *mufti*, wore all the charm of a naive explicitness. Moss and grey-green lichen covered the trees and walls, the gates drooped on rickety hinges, while in front of the farmhouse door a wheel-less cart leant against a stalwart apple-tree.

The day passes quietly in such a place. The ducks, near the small muddy pond hard-by, took their mid-day siesta ranged in battle line with their heads tucked under their wings; a small yellow cow looked curiously over a gate at Dorothy, and the pigeons kept up the livelong day their drowsy song. By-and-by Mr. Needl made an expedition within doors, whence he returned with a bowl of fresh milk. A little breeze was creeping up the downs, and long blue shadows were spreading themselves across the parched ground. The hot afternoon was giving way to a splendid mellow evening, as Dorothy shut up her paint-box with something like a sigh.

Their talk had been fitful and inconsequent, as talk is apt to be on sultry August days, but to Dorothy, at least, it had not been without a vague kind of charm. She had always felt, even in her inexperience of better things, the want of repose in the gilded youth of Westhampton. They were amateurish in the accomplishment of passing summer days, and were apt, in ladies' society, to be embarrassed by the possession of their own arms and hands. Dorothy had often called them "elbowy," and the presence of a gentleman whose mission in life seemed to be to lie at her feet, was a novelty that appealed to something that was not altogether new in her thoughts.

Such days when satisfactory lead inevitably in one direction. They lead to repetition, and repetition to unforeseen consequences. No two days in our lives are absolutely alike, whatever we may say

about monotony; we ourselves are not the same, we either move, be it never so little, a step forwards or backwards.

Thus the next ten days were eloquent of many things to Dorothy. Painting at the farm, strolling over the downs, or sitting by the sea, she almost invariably found one companion by her side on whom these things did not appear to pall. It was only now and again she felt a strange aloofness from Mr. Needl; it was generally in the evening, when he had drifted into the company of a young lady who had already attracted her attention by her charming profile and remarkable independence of manners.

It was at this precise juncture—that is, if we would be accurate, about a fortnight after Dorothy's arrival in St. Sulpice—that she received a shock which considerably dimmed her Paradise.

Coming down the garden one morning, she caught sight of a piece of notepaper lying across the path. Imagining it to be one of her own letters, she picked it up, but as she inspected it more nearly on her way down to the beach, she discovered it to be written in an unknown hand. It was, indeed, of the sprawling kind of calligraphy, with most of the words curtailed in a way to suit rather the convenience of the writer than the reader, and for a few moments Dorothy was unable to guess in what language the communication might be. But with that curious feeling which prompts us to do what is difficult, and leave undone that which is easy, she began puzzling out the words. It was in English, and was dated two or three days back. It ran as follows:

"Instead of going to Caen and Bayeux, I find myself tumbled down in the quaintest little hole that I have chanced upon in a country that prides itself upon being quaint. Not that we are architectural or archaeological here in St. Sulpice, not a bit of it; it's our manners and customs which are enjoyably original. What do you say to tripping down a beach with a sylph in becoming costume, with whom you have danced overnight, and then and there plunging into a sufficiently deep sea? It has its attractive side, I can assure you. Breakfast follows, and then we lounge, and smoke, and drive, and paint bad pictures—everybody paints at St. Sulpice—then dinner and a waltz with the sylph of the morning, a cigar and a tumble-down in an attic, a barn, or a rigged up hayloft, or any other locality that may have been turned into a bedroom

by the ingenious proprietors of the hotel. We get along without the architecture, you see. There is, however, a charming little provincial girl here who seems to miss it, and who, I believe, would like Gothic cathedrals, dungeons, and what not, to grow along the coast for the convenience of visitors. She has the most ingenuous hazel eyes and independent ideas that she manufactures in her own small head ; if only she wouldn't paint ! A hundred years hence it will be asked why every young lady in our age painted bad pictures or wrote an ungrammatical work of fiction. Here is a strictly modern instance of a woman with brains, who misapplies them in a form which gives you the toothache. She'll never paint—but after all, I suppose, the things we shall never do would fill a big book."

That was all Dorothy read, for the identity of the little provincial girl who painted bad pictures and made herself ridiculous about Gothic cathedrals began to be plain to her. It was no less a person than herself, and the writer she further surmised to be an Englishman staying next door.

It was a splendid August day, but this scrap of paper seemed to stand between her and the sun. She went down to the water's edge to tell this new trouble to her old friend the sea, but somehow there seemed neither pity nor respite for her in the vast, dancing, blue expanse.

Her face, always expressive of her thoughts, would have been a curious study at that moment. Laid bare in its rough undress, her mind seemed to struggle with some readjustment of her self-respect and wounded pride, while her soul, dimly reaching out over the horizon, seemed to writhe in sorry straits. A little quiver trembled along the line of her mouth, but her hands were clasped firmly together, and no tears fell. She felt that she had no real right to expect anything of the writer of that letter, yet she knew that it had pleased her to expect a great deal. It was not so much the sudden revelation of her incapacity to paint that wounded her, but the fact that Mr. Neeld should regard her in a light that would make it possible for him to write flippantly about her. It will be seen that Dorothy had already travelled a long way from the independent spirit that had characterised her at Westhampton, but then it must be remembered that we are never independent of those we love. It is to be feared that Dorothy had

become, during the last two weeks, hopelessly dependent on the good-will of her laconic neighbour.

In this distressing case, poor Dorothy forgot that she had not breakfasted, but the emptiness of the whole beach reminded her that it must be past noonday. In a few minutes there would be loungers and coffee-drinkers on the casino terrace, from which vantage-ground she could be seen. Dorothy jumped up with a longing for solitude and fresh air. The sun was oppressively hot—she naturally turned her face to the higher ground. She had to pass by the hotel, where the noise and heat of the déjeuner was at its height. The smell of cooking proceeded from every door and window, while the noisy clatter of dishes and the shrill cry of the waiters met her ear. Dorothy felt no inclination to go inside, so passed up the principal street, now silent and glaring in the burning mid-day sun, to the steep winding road that led to the downs. Standing still, she heard the faint buzz of mosquitos, while, as she moved, the parched ground seemed to scorch her feet, and the gutter, which ran in primitive fashion down the middle of the street, gave out a sickly, oppressive odour.

Dorothy did not return until evening, but even the cooler air brought by the setting sun did nothing to assuage her headache. On reaching the cottage, she sent the bonne for a bottle of seltzer-water, and scribbled a line in pencil, which she sent to her friend Mrs. Finnis, accounting for her non-appearance.

By-and-by, in the soothing darkness, she rose from the bed on which she had thrown herself, and leant on the windowsill. The night was very still ; up above in the great vault thousands of stars shone in the sky. She had had many pretty fancies about them in her childhood ; each star then had shone on the forehead of an angel ; now they seemed a long way off, and made her feel dizzy.

By-and-by, when her ear had become accustomed to the faint noises of the village, she heard the distant sound of music. It was a dance night at the casino. She jumped up, and in an instant had wrapped a dark shawl round her, and had passed down the staircase into the street. Walking quickly past the cottages and the principal entrance to the casino, which was brightly lighted, she found her way over the rough shingle, past the boats, down on to the beach. There she could see the casino

terrace, and the flight of steps which led to the sea. All was dark and desolate, except in the direction of the casino. There, as usual, the crowd of visitors thronged, and Dorothy soon recognised many of the figures silhouetted against the twinkling lamps. There is always a certain dreariness in watching a familiar scene in which we do not take part. There is a sense of being alienated and shut out. Dorothy was suffering too much to be aware that her isolation added to her greater wretchedness. She was conscious only of one feeling, one desire, that seemed to parch up her existence, just as the fever was burning in her throat. It was for the sight of a well-known face that she had not seen for a whole day. Would he never come?

The dance music struck up again as she stood and waited; lightly-clad women, with careless laughter, rustled above her amid the lights of the casino. Then two figures that she had longed for, yet dreaded to see, came lightly along from the dancing-room, and leant on the terrace rail.

Dorothy shut her eyes for a moment, as something seemed to rise in her throat. She pressed her small nervous hands together to prevent herself crying aloud. She seemed to suddenly feel cold. The gentleman had an attentive, even an amused air, as he leant over his companion, who in reply to something he whispered, turned her clear-cut profile coquettishly for inspection, as she laughed a small, thin, matter-of-fact laugh. That was all she saw.

In front of them lay the great sea lost in blackness. A faint mist had stolen up from the horizon and shrouded the stars; only a thin line of surf shone in the darkness on the upward creeping tide.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME three weeks had passed since Dorothy had stood on the beach of St. Sulpice and watched the lights and figures on the casino terrace. Everything since that time had been blotted out, a dull, aching, tossing time had intervened, in which her dimmed perceptions had recognised neither day nor night. She had had typhoid fever.

The aspect of St. Sulpice had visibly changed during those three weeks. Half the visitors in the village had been frightened away by the rumour of fever, and the remaining bolder half had been scattered by the equinoctial gales, which had come

somewhat earlier than usual that autumn. The hotel stood bare and empty, and the casino lamps had been extinguished for the winter, although the autumn was hardly come.

The first hot stifling nights of Dorothy's illness had given way to rain and storm, and the crisis of her illness passed as the wind roared round the cliffs, and shook the thin walls of the cottage as if they had been paper. Mrs. Finnis, on discovering Dorothy's condition, had immediately telegraphed to her husband to come over and remove the children, although she herself, with her characteristic energy, had determined to stay and nurse her friend. She wrote punctually to the Macquorn family, but insisted that it would be unnecessary for any of them to make the journey to Normandy, as she had charge of Dorothy, and would see to everything possible being done for her. Mrs. Finnis, it must be admitted, was very proud of her nursing capacities, and was by no means inclined to relinquish her charge to the inexperience of one of Dorothy's younger sisters.

In the meantime the heavily freighted diligence denuded St. Sulpice day by day of visitors; the casino announced its closing day, and the more ornamental shops put up their shutters. The excitement of the summer season unexpectedly subsided, and prices assumed their ordinary level. "It was a truly lamentable state of things," said M. George, the hotel-keeper.

One stranger, however, remained in St. Sulpice apparently unscared. Hawley Neeld showed no sign of quitting the deserted bathing resort. Mrs. Finnis had more than once expressed unfeigned surprise at his continued presence, but to tell the truth no one was more surprised than himself.

On hearing first of Miss Macquorn's illness he had immediately called next door to make enquiries. There he had encountered Mrs. Finnis in the passage while he was putting some questions in rather lame French to the complacent bonne. Mrs. Finnis looked grave, almost excited.

"Come in," she said quickly, and walking on tip-toe she drew him into the little room with its red-tiled floor and huge eight-day clock. A rough deal table and two or three chairs were the only embellishments to this apartment, but the bright sun flooded in at the door, and the orange nasturtiums almost clambered in at the window.

"Her head is very bad," said Mrs. Finnis. "I am afraid it is fever. But what I want you for is this," she went on. "Dorothy has begged me to give you this letter. It seems it is something of yours. How the poor child got it I can't make out. Ah, I remember! she said she picked it up in the garden. She was very anxious it should be returned to you, at any rate."

"A letter?" said Neeld, who began to remember that he had mislaid a half-finished letter to a friend of his some two or three days before. "What is it?"

"Of course I know nothing about it, except what Dorothy tells me. She read it, it seems, at first without knowing in the least in whose writing it was; but I can't help telling you, Mr. Neeld, that whatever is in the letter seems to have upset her very much. She keeps talking about it!"

It is to be feared that the air of St. Sulpice la Val did not do Mr. Neeld very much good after this interview. It is even said that he got to dislike the place. Yet he did not leave it. On the other hand he talked a good deal, when he saw Mrs. Finnis, of St. Sulpice being a capital place to read in now that it was empty. He even went out of his way to make a mild joke or two about being able to stretch his legs now without fear of treading on the other visitors. While he was making these characteristic excuses to Mrs. Finnis to account for his presence in St. Sulpice, he was giving himself almost unconsciously another set of reasons. A man is in a bad way who makes a number of excuses for doing an ordinary thing, and this was precisely what Hawley Neeld was doing. Sitting in his little garden he could see Mrs. Finnis now and again moving past the window of the next cottage, and at intervals catch the incoherent voice of poor Dorothy as she tossed about in her fever. He would be little short of a brute, he told himself, to desert Mrs. Finnis at such a moment. There might be some errand to run, some doctor to fetch—who could tell? Yet as the days went by and stretched themselves into weeks, he had not even the small satisfaction of knowing that he had been of use. He had never felt so useless and helpless before.

The evening on which Mrs. Finnis had returned him his unlucky letter, proved to be the hottest of all that suffocating time. Old fishermen, with all the love of astounding statements usual with simple folk, said they never remembered such a

sun for twenty years, or so many mosquitos on that coast. But then they were apt to say the same thing every second summer for the pacification of foreigners.

Neeld had lighted a cigar instead of turning in, and sat leaning against the wall of the garden. It was past midnight, and not a sound broke the silence of the village except now and again the dismal howl of a watch-dog in the distance. Sullen and lowering clouds obscured the stars, only seawards flashes of vivid lightning lit up the dark night. An unnatural stillness reigned, Nature seemed to be holding her breath before the coming tumult.

Hawley Neeld was by no means a fanciful man. He had never, except in the exigencies of polite conversation, pretended to understand what nerves meant, yet he experienced that night a novel sensation of dread as he watched the neighbouring cottage window and waited for the coming storm.

He was easy-going, as was natural with a man who had a splendid physique, an appreciative humour, and sufficient income. Such portions of stirring dramas or sentimental novels as were reckoned "touching," simply made him stare. With the best will in the world there was no fibre in Hawley Neeld's nature that could up to that time have been touched, and in this particular he had not the best will in the world. He took life as became a man accustomed to many climates and races, from its active, healthy, open-air side, and to such a man every obstacle was to be overcome by energy.

The pathos of life was what he had never understood. He had rather looked upon it as a woman's department. Now for the first time he stood under the shadow of those forces before which the strongest man is powerless.

Sickness had crept in on this easy-going, sunny, lounging life; and now that it was no longer an object to sun himself, he murmured unreasonably that he was a useless dog. The hardest task that the irony of fate can ask of such a man is to wait.

For the first time in his life he felt unable to sit still; an unaccountable restlessness seized him, which he tried to walk off by pacing up and down in front of the cottages.

"Nothing better than a watch-dog," he muttered; then, as he threw away his cigar, he tried to console himself with the idea that sometimes a dog can be of use. It was not much of a consolation, but it was

the only one he could find to take indoors with him for the night. One or two heavy drops of rain were already falling, but something, as he passed the next cottage, made him halt, and almost hold his breath.

It was the sound of poor Dorothy's voice from the open window. It sounded like a cry. Then came words caught in snatches.

"So many lights—take me back—it is too far off—I shall never paint—see! look at them standing up there—how dark the sun is—water, water!"

She was wandering.

"Poor child, poor child!" Neeld murmured as the storm at last broke.

Some three weeks after, in the changed autumn weather, Hawley Neeld was surprised to hear that Dorothy Macquorn had gone out. He had come, as was his wont, to enquire after the invalid, having made, as he himself humorously reckoned, the same mistake in French for the forty-second time. The grammatical error had again been politely ignored by the bonne, when he learnt that Mrs. Finnis had gone to the nearest railway-station, some twenty miles off, to meet Mr. Macquorn, who had come over to fetch home his daughter. The invalid had just gone out, he further learnt. She had gone down the road in the direction of the sea, and had refused any escort.

It did not take Hawley Neeld long to follow her. She was going back, then, this small, pale acquaintance of his, to the hard, narrow, sophisticated county town that she had so often half-laughingly described to him, and all his waiting had availed nothing. He wondered in a curious hopeless way what he should do next, and supposed that it must have been something in the cheerless day that made him feel so lonely. It was indeed one of those bleak days at the end of September that scatter almost the recollection of summer.

There had been a little pale watery sunshine earlier in the afternoon, but now towards five o'clock the clouds were dark and angry. Neeld saw nothing but the torn and ragged sky leaning on the dismal sea. The chill breeze blowing over the downs seemed to lift the clouds at one point in the horizon, making a blurred silver streak; elsewhere the grim evening embraced sky and sea in a dim watery greyness. Inshore stretched the deserted pebbly beach, lined by the tumult of angry, foam-tossed waves. The one

human touch to this dreary picture was a small figure huddled up on the empty casino steps. It was Dorothy in a large cloak, come down to say good-bye to the seashore.

When Neeld caught sight of her, he crossed over the pebbles with a few quick strides. He experienced a novel feeling of excitement and anxiety, but no longer the hopeless feeling of a few minutes back.

"This is no day for you to be out," he said, with the nearest approach to a tremor his voice had ever known; "Great Heavens! the wind is enough to kill you."

"I—I wanted to see the place once again," she murmured timidly; "we may be going to-morrow."

"You will come back—you will let me take you home?" he asked entreatingly; then he stooped, and taking her two hands, raised her gently as a mother would her child. He placed her hand under his arm, and, without speaking, turned and looked earnestly into her small pale face.

"I feel rather weak; I cannot walk alone," she answered helplessly as she clung to the strong support.

Neeld seemed satisfied with this arrangement, for he did not again speak. They made their way in this wise up the steep beach, each busy with one thought. Then he said as if she had only just spoken:

"I should be satisfied if only I could help you. I should want nothing better of life."

Dorothy trembled, but whether in weakness or in answer he could not tell. Neither of them spoke again until they had passed up the village street and entered the cottage-garden, now all tumbled and strewn with withered leaves. Neeld opened the cottage door, and then stood aside diffidently for her to pass in. He thought the day grew greyer as he did so. It seemed as if she would just as easily slip out of his life. How many minutes passed he hardly knew; he began to say something, and then drew back, searching for some kind of answer in her eyes.

In the meantime Dorothy was leaning with one hand on the door-handle, gazing blindly into the small cottage interior. The servant had lighted a few sticks in the fireplace to cheer the invalid, and the flickering light lit up the red-tiled floor, a bunch of field-flowers on the deal table, and the other homely details of the little room. But Dorothy saw none of these things. She felt only that all doubt and

uncertainty were ended—scattered like the autumn leaves. Her face was radiant with some inner light as she turned at last to Hawley Needel.

"Come in," she said simply.

It was not an effusive invitation, but with this woman's voice vibrating in his ear, it seemed as if he were asked to enter into the gates of heaven.

INVITATIONS.

INVITING General Churchill to visit him in his retirement at Houghton Hall, Walpole wrote : "This place affords no news, no subject of amusement and entertainment to you fine gentlemen. Persons of wit and pleasure about town understand not the language, nor taste the charms of the inanimate world. The oaks, the beeches, and chestnuts, seem to contend which should best please the lord of the manor. They cannot deceive, they will not lie. I, in return, with sincerity admire them, and have about me as many beauties as take up all my hours of dangling. Within doors, we come a little to real life, and admire in the almost speaking canvas all the airs and graces which the proudest of the ladies can boast. With these I am satisfied, as they gratify me with all I wish and all I want, and expect nothing in return which I cannot give. If these, dear Charles, are any temptations, I heartily invite you to come and partake of them. Shifting the scene has sometimes its recommendations ; and from country fare you may possibly return with a better appetite to the more delicate entertainment of a court life."

The "most honest of corruptionists" effectually guarded against his desired guest suffering from unrealised expectation. Dr. Sheridan seems to have gone the other way about, when, asking Swift to dine at his house, he promised him, in the Latino - Anglicus they both affected : "Ago use, a paro dux. Sum fis hes, as a paro so les, a paro places. A pud in. A fri casei. Arabit astu in. Neu pes. Neu beans. Alam pi fit fors minis ter o state. A cus tardis it abit as at tartis ? Mi liquor is toc qui, it costus api Stola quart. A quartos ac. Margo use claret as fine as a rubi. Graves. Lac rima Christi. Hoc. Co te rotæ. Sum Cyprus. As fine Sidere se ver Id runcat everne."

Britton, the first concert-giver, had a stereotyped form of invitation to the

gratuitous musical performances in the room over his coal-shed, running :

"Upon Thursdays repair to my palace, and there Hobble up stair by stair ; but I pray you take care,
That you break not your neck by a stumble ;
And without e'er a spouse, paid to me or my spouse,
Sit still as a mouse, at the top of the house,
And there you shall hear how we fumble."

Parodying one of Macheath's songs, Colman wrote to Planché :

"The dinner's prepared, the party is met,
The dishes are ranged—not one is for show.
Then come undismay'd, your visit's a debt—
A debt on demand—we won't take a 'No.'
You'll fare well, good sir, you can't fear a dew,
Contented you'll sleep, 'twill be better for you ;
And sleeping, you know, is the rest of our lives,
And this way we'll try to please both our wives.

Come to Richmond to-morrow to dinner, or you will have lost your Kew for pleasing everybody here." When, in his capacity of Examiner of Plays, Colman received the manuscript of Bunn's *The Minister and the Mercer*, from Lord Belfast, marked by that captious Lord Chamberlain, he notified the fact to the adapter thus : "DEAR BUNN,—Pray dine with me to-day at half-past five. But come at four ; we shall then have time to cut the play before we cut the mutton." And it were hard to say which suffered most, the dish or the drama.

Anxious to repay a clever young clergyman for a flattering dedication, Archbishop Herring told him to drop in at Lambeth Palace whenever he was so inclined, inadvertently adding, that the oftener he saw him the more he should be obliged to him. Taking lodgings in the neighbourhood, shrewd Mr. Faukes contrived to "drop in" at the palace every day at dinner-time, until the archbishop was driven to something more than hinting that he had had enough of his company ; but his unwelcome guest would not understand, and to rid himself of the infliction, he gave him a couple of good livings, and Mr. Faukes found himself well rewarded for ignoring the common saying, that a general invitation is no invitation at all.

True enough, as a rule, the saying does not always hold good. If the Laureate's friend was not to be drawn to the Isle of Wight by the assurance,

"You'll have no scandal while you dine,
But honest talk and wholesome wine,
And only hear the magpie gossip,
Garrulous under a roof of pine,"

he was scarcely the man to resist the poet's hearty,

" Come, Maurice, come ; the lawn as yet
 Is hoar with rime, or spongy-wet ;
 But when the wreath of March has
 blossom'd,
 Crocus, anemone, violet ;
 Or later, pay one visit here,
 For those are few we hold so dear ;
 Nor pay but one, but come for many,
 Many and many a happy year."

Lord Beaconsfield pronounces the throwing over of a host to be the most heinous of social crimes, and one that ought never to be pardoned. This is in accordance with the ancient rule that nothing but illness, imprisonment, or death could exonerate a man from fulfilling an engagement to dine at another man's table. Modern hosts are not quite so inexorable, or Thackeray would have been compelled to forego the temptation of indulging in tripe and onions at his club, instead of escaping from an engagement on the plea of having unexpectedly met with an old friend, whom he found it impossible to leave. Lord Fife would have been obliged to risk shocking Lady Cork's guests by appearing among them in extreme undress ; unless, indeed, confinement in bed, by reason of a blackguard creditor carrying off all his belongings barring a cast of Vestris's leg, came under the head of imprisonment. But even a Roman dinner-giver might have forgiven the gentleman who, failing to keep promise, wrote : " Mr. O——'s affairs turn out so sadly that he cannot have the pleasure of waiting on his lordship at his agreeable house on Monday next. N.B.—His wife is dead."

Learning that Charles Mathews was playing at Bristol, the Duke of Beaufort invited him to Badminton, telling him that among the company already there were two of Her Majesty's judges. The actor, in reply, regretted his engagements precluded him from visiting Badminton, because nothing would have given him greater pleasure to have taken the lives of two judges at pool. " Charley " owed the bench something on his father's account. Mathews the elder, being in Shrewsbury one assize time, turned into court for an hour's amusement. He had not been there many minutes, when an usher put a note in his hand, running : " Judge Park hopes Mr. Mathews will come and sit by him." Threading his way through the crowd, the gratified comedian mounted the judgment-seat, and humbly yet proudly took the place awarded him. The judge shook him cordially by the hand, put the trial list before him, and a packet of sandwiches at his elbow, and made him altogether com-

fortable. Two or three years afterwards Mathews was staying with his friend Rolls, and over the wine and walnuts, the latter asked the actor if he had met Justice Park somewhere ; a question setting Mathews in such praise of the judge, that Rolls could not keep from laughing, and so raising suspicion. " Did he say anything about me ? " queried Mathews. " Well," was the reply, " he was here not long ago, and said to me : ' I think, Rolls, you are a friend of Mathews, the actor, who has such a dreadful propensity for taking people off. Imagine my consternation, at Shrewsbury, two years ago, on seeing him directly in front of me, evidently studying me with the intention of showing me up. What do you think I did ? I sent a courteous message to him, and invited him to come and sit by me ; and so, I trust, propitiated him, that he will have too much good feeling ever to introduce me into his gallery of legal portraits.' "

Swift was at no pains to be polite when declining an invitation from his friend Sheridan to bring his lady friends to taste his wine, writing : " Mrs. Dingley and Mrs. Johnson say truly they don't care for your wife's company, though they like your wine ; but they had rather have it at their own house to drink in quiet. However, they own it very civil in Mr. Sheridan to make the offer." Byron sent Lady Dover word he " would not come " to her soirée ; and might as well have kept his word, for any pleasure he or the lady derived from his changing his mind, since he recorded on the fly-leaf of his Virgil : " Went, after all, for half an hour—home again—hate society. Man has been designated a selfish animal. Now, what in the name of comfort should bring any selfish man here ? Unless self prompt us to do nothing but what is agreeable, I do not know why it should have an 'ish' tied to its tail. People going to a swarre are not selfish, they sacrifice comfort and virtue, if they possess that article. At Lady D.'s squeeze I was condemned to listen to an old dowager and Lord C——, the old noodle ! "

When a certain English author was asked to the house of an American lady of advanced opinions " to meet some minds at tea," he declined the proffered hospitality on the ground that he was engaged to meet some stomachs at dinner. Probably he thought, like Citoyenne Désiré, that ladies of advanced opinions are best kept at a distance. That wife of a French artisan had the courage to take the redoubtable

Louise Michel to task for turning her husband's head with her foolish writings ; making him fancy himself a statesman, under which delusion he neglected his work and starved his family, for the good of his country. An animated correspondence ensued, of which—perhaps because she got the worst of the argument—the famous feminine Communist first grew tired ; whereupon she brought it to an end with : “I cannot waste any more time upon the Citoyenne Désiré, who has been annoying me. If she has anything more to say, she had better come to my office, where I have a broom ready for her reception.” The next issue of the *Revolution Sociale* contained the triumphant announcement : “The Citoyenne Désiré has not accepted my invitation !”

Many an invitation, like that of Louise Michel, has been given in the expectation of its non-acceptance. An ex-attaché records an instance of one being given on the express condition that it should not be acted upon. He adored a lady “on the outskirts of society ;” she worried him to get her an invitation to an embassy ball, and he worried the ambassadress to grant the favour, but all he could obtain was an invitation to dinner, sent with the understanding that it was not to be used. The lady put the invitation card where every caller could see it, and when a friend observed, “I did not see you, dear, at the embassy ball,” she was able to reply : “No, dear, I was so sorry not to be able to go, nor to dinner before, for I was not very well.” And the card on the table was accepted as proof that she was not lying.

ABOUT ROSEMARY.

THE plant rosemary was much used and esteemed by our ancestors. Its fragrant smell must have been fraught with many memories to them, some of joy and some of deepest sorrow.

Garlands of rosemary hung in their churches at Christmas. In an account for the parish of St. Margaret, Westminster, A.D. 1647, we read : “Item, paid for rosemary and bayes, that was stuck about the Church at Christmas, one shilling and six-pence ;” and the poet Gay, in his *Trivia*, sings :

When rosemary and bays, the poet's crown,
Are bawl'd in frequent cries through all the town,
Then judge the festival of Christmas near,
Christmas, the joyous period of the year !

Rosemary was borne before the bride as

she went to be married, and it was strewn on the path of the bridal party on their return from the church. This plant was used at the wedding-feast—it was dipped in the wine-cups before they were raised to the lips to drink the health of the bride. Both rosemary and bayes appear to have been gilded on these occasions. In a curious wedding sermon, by Roger Hacket, D.D., 1607, he thus expatiates on the use of rosemary :

“The last of the flowers is the Rosemary (*Rosmarinus*, the Rosemary is for married men), the which by name, nature, and continued use, man challengeth as properly belonging to himself. It overtoppeth all the Flowers in the Garden, boasting man's rule. It helpeth the Braine, strengtheneth the Memorie, and is very medicinable for the Head. Another property of the Rosemary is, it affects the Hart. Let this Rose Marinus, this flower of men, Ensigne of your Wisdome, Love, and Loyaltie, be carried not only in your Hands, but in your Heads and Harts.”

While rosemary wafted memories of joy, its sweet breath was also laden with sorrowful recollections, for it was carried at funerals as well as worn at weddings. In Decker's *Wonderfull Yeare*, 1603, speaking of a bride who died of the plague on her wedding-day, he says :

“Here is a strange alteration, for the Rosemary that was wash't in sweet water to set out the bridall is now wet in teares to furnish her buriall.”

Rosemary was carried at funerals probably for its odour, and as a token of remembrance of the deceased. This custom is noticed as late as the time of Gay, who died in 1732. In his *Pastoral Dirge* we find these descriptive lines :

To show their love, the neighbours far and near
Follow'd with wistful look the damsel's bier.
Sprigg'd rosemary the lads and lasses bore,
While dismaly the parson walk'd before.
Upon her grave the rosemary they threw,
The daisie, butter-flow'r, and endive blue.

In South Lancashire, I believe, the use of rosemary in funeral rites is still observed. Sprigs of rosemary are placed on the corpse as it lies receiving the last visits of old friends, and it is usual to scatter them in the grave. The corpse lying thus adorned brings to mind Friar Laurence's words in the fourth act of *Romeo and Juliet* : “Dry up your tears and stick your rosemary on this fair corse ;” and we see from the answer of Capulet that this same rosemary had been “ordained for festival” and as bridal flowers.

Besides figuring in these private and domestic scenes, we find it mentioned on a very grand and public occasion, namely, in a curious printed account of Queen Elizabeth's entry into the City of London, January 14, 1558.

"How many nosegays did Her Grace receye at poore women's hands! . . . A branch of Rosemary given to Her Grace, with a supplication by a poore woman about Fleet Bridge, was seene in her chariot till Her Grace came to West-minster."

Rosemary was anciently thought to strengthen memory. This property of the plant is embalmed by Shakespeare in Ophelia's plaintive words: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray, love, remember." This pathetic utterance will surely connect rosemary with memory to the end of time. Perdita, too, in the Winter's Tale, alludes to the same idea:

Reverend sirs,
For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep
Seeming and savour all the winter long:
Grace and remembrance be to you both,
And welcome to our shearing!

Rosemary became scarce after the Plague, for Decker says: "Rosemary, which had wont to be sold for twelvepence an armful, went now"—on account of the Plague—"at six shillings a handful." It did not go entirely out of fashion in London till the close of the last century, and then owing to a dearth of the plant. From a stanza in Shenstone's Schoolmistress, 1742, it seems to have found a shelter and growing place in country gardens when it became scarce in towns and lordly grounds:

And here trim rosemarine, that whilom crown'd
The daintiest garden of the proudest peer,
Ere driven from its envy'd site it found
A sacred shelter for its branches here,
Where edg'd with gold its glitt'ring skirts appear.
Oh, wassel days! Oh, customs meet and well!
Ere this was banish'd from its lofty sphere;
Simplicity then sought this humble cell,
Nor ever would she more with thane and lordling
dwell.

It is quite certain that in our time it is so little known or cultivated that many people would be puzzled to describe it; many, perhaps, do not remember to have seen it; and to most of us its only familiar use is as one of the ingredients of hair-wash. As one of Shakespeare's flowers, it ought to be dear to English hearts, and to gain admittance into modern gardens. Many old-fashioned cottage flowers have lately become the cherished ornaments of the "trim gardens of retired leisure." Add

another in the rosemary. Its pretty poetical name is from the Latin *Rosmarinus*, sea-dew, thus called because the underpart of the leaves is white, as if splashed with the spray of the ocean. The flower is of a pale-blush or greyish white, and of an extremely fragrant smell and aromatic taste. It is not a native of England, but grows wild in the South of Europe, flourishing in France, Spain, Italy, the basin of the Mediterranean, and Asia Minor. In the district of Narbonne it forms hedges for gardens, and its aroma is said to give the honey of Narbonne its fine flavour. Its essential oil is combined with camphor, and it deposits crystals of camphor when long kept. Hungary Water is made of it; it is reviving, and relieves headache. In old Herbals we find it described as useful in strains and bruises, and given internally is said to have cured a Queen of Hungary of a paralytic affliction. The plant sometimes buds in January, but its common time for flowering is April. It was one of Kirke White's favourite flowers; but he describes an exceptional season when he writes of it as "Loving to bloom on January's front severe."

We find no certain record of its cultivation in England before the year 1548; but it is probable that it was introduced here long before that date, perhaps brought home by some Crusader, for it was sung by troubadours as an emblem of constancy and devotion to the fair sex.

In conclusion, here is a Spanish proverb on the rosemary, which contains either a warning of a fate to be shunned, or a happy promise of a danger escaped for ever:

Quien pasa por romero, y no lo quiere coger,
Ni tiene amores ni los quiere tener!

thus freely translated by the late Lord Nugent:

Who passeth by the rosemarie,
And careth not to take a spray,
For woman's love no care hath he,
Nor shall he though he live for aye!

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXII. COMMITTED.

MRS. HATTON was getting through the hours of the night very satisfactorily. In the bygone days about which she was wont to be pathetically retrospective at times, she had been possessed of a wonderful capacity for enjoyment, especially for the enjoyment of society. There was in her a

good deal more holiday blood than runs in the veins of the majority of Englishwomen, who are apt to take their pleasure with languor, and a feeling of boredom that resembles sorrow as the mist resembles the rain. But Mrs. Hatton loved to celebrate every little anniversary in the calendar by a fête, on however small a scale, and never grew fatigued or weary in making preparations for it.

Since these halcyon days there had intervened a period of humiliation, anxiety, neglect, poverty, and loneliness. But these experiences, bitterly as she had felt them, had not robbed her of the power of enjoyment. True, she had come to Mrs. Archibald Campbell's At Home to-night, feeling that for her society would wear a widely different aspect, and lack a vast portion of the charm it had possessed for her, when she had been endowed with the power of bidding it to her own house. But now, after the experience of an hour or two, she felt that a good deal of her old self was being resuscitated under the influence of the sights and sounds that were around her.

The light laughter, the never-ceasing hum of conversation, the music, the lights and flowers, the pretty dresses, and above all, the indefinable interest that attaches to the personnel of a number of men and women who have made names more or less creditable and widely-known in contemporaneous art, literature, and the drama, all these exercised their subtle influence over her. It had been through no fault of hers—only through a brief bit of confiding folly—that her life had been laid waste for a time. Now it seemed as if the flowers were about to spring up in her path again, and she gave herself up to the fullest sense of enjoyment that seeming promised her.

She had not joined the crowd which had undulated and swayed round Mr. Josiah H. Whittler during his first recitation. But some of the cadences and inflections of the American actor's well-managed voice fell upon her ear, and she knew from the irrepressible way in which his audience burst now and again into simultaneous peals of laughter, that he made his points well.

He had not appeared on the boards of an English theatre yet, but he came with a fine reputation from Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, and a big house was expected for his initial performance. He was cast for the leading character in a piece that had been written expressly for him by

a dramatist whose reputation was still unsoiled by the breath of a suspicion of failure, and a leading English tragedian had consented to take the secondary part. Altogether his first appearance was to make an epoch in current stage history, and a brilliant house was confidently announced.

It was an opportunity not to be lost. Here was a distinguished man, whom to know would be fame in her now limited circle, and by making a little effort she might know him.

"I take such a deep interest in every form of American culture; I am never tired of considering the points whereon they diverge, and the points whereon they agree and march with our more time-worn systems. They live at such a pace! It must be thrilling to win the sympathies of the American public on the boards; if they admire and approve, the admiration and approbation must come home to one with such force and speed," she said in her brightest and most fervent manner.

"On the other hand, it must be said that their sarcasm and disapprobation manifest themselves with equal force and speed," Mr. Archibald Campbell said; then as he felt himself to be due in another quarter, and as this was a vivacious, amusing little woman, he added: "But Mr. Whittler can tell you all about it. It seems he was unknown to fame till within the last few months, and now he always travels by special trains, and keeps one secretary employed solely with opening and answering managerial entreaties to name his own day and price, and make them the happiest of men. Shall I introduce him to you?"

It was a proud moment for the woman to whom neglect and obscurity were as a blighting east wind, and who had shivered under neglect in obscurity so long. She had come here a stranger to-night, having no hold or claim of comradeship or similarity of pursuits, and struggles, and hopes, with any one of the people about her, and now, by the sheer force of her will and fascination, she was presently to be prominently honoured by her host introducing his most distinguished guest to her.

She felt suddenly that she was the centre of attraction and observation as Mr. Campbell made way for her to pass into the circle, and tried to gain Mr. Josiah H. Whittler's attention. For one instant she glanced round triumphantly, feeling that a becoming dress, excitement, and the sense of being of temporary importance, were combining to make her look almost

as pretty as of old. Then she turned her eyes on the American actor, who was lingering to hear a few more honeyed words, and all the pride and glory, all the harmless—almost piteous—self-satisfaction went out abruptly, leaving a frightened, helpless, miserable woman in the place of the bright, beaming, self-complacent one who had come up to be crowned with the special honour of an introduction to Mr. Josiah H. Whittler.

"I'm ill—in pain; let me go back!" she stammered out, withdrawing her hand quickly from her host's arm. "No, no; don't come with me," she added hurriedly, as he followed her. "I must go home. These attacks—"

She sank down half-fainting on the nearest chair, but roused herself again directly, under the influence of the agonised dread she had that Mr. Campbell would call someone to her, and make her the subject of a general remark.

"Let me go without a word," she pleaded with a ghastly smile. "Don't come down with me. Tell Miss Ray I am ill and gone home, but don't—don't speak of me to anyone else."

Mr. Archibald Campbell promised readily, but hardly knew to what he was pledging himself; and then the poor stricken woman hurried away as fast as her trembling limbs would carry her. In another minute she was cowering away in the corner of a cab, not sobbing or moaning, but shivering as one who had received a death-blow.

Which indeed was the case. The death-blow of a belief she had fondly nurtured, without knowing how dear it was to her till now—that death-blow had been dealt to it to-night.

Ann met her at the door, and after one glance at the pallid wretched face, led her mistress in silence to her own bedroom.

There was not a word spoken by either of them until Mrs. Hatton, still shivering as if in an ague-fit, was got into bed. Then she looked up into Ann's sorrowful face, and the scalding, unrelieving tears rushed from her own eyes suddenly.

"You've met your 'trouble' again, I see," the servant murmured sympathetically.

"Yes, it's a living one still; but, oh, Ann, he didn't see me to know me! Perhaps he'll never find me out. Oh, I never knew what peace there has been even in all this poverty that I've passed through, I never knew how I hated him till to-night."

Then she told Ann how in the celebrated American actor, Mr. Josiah H. Whittler, she had recognised her own worthless, cruel, vicious husband, who had deserted her years ago.

"He didn't recognise me! He may never find me out!"

There was a fervent thanksgiving breathed in the first sentence. There was a passionate prayer prayed in the second. No fiercely-worded denunciation of him could have betrayed such profound aversion, loathing, contempt, hatred, and fear for and of him as did these tremblingly-spoken sentences.

The woman was absolutely writhing in her soul at the possibility of the anguish of being reunited to him.

"What peace it has been! Oh, and I'd endure double the worry the poverty has caused me sometimes to go on having the peace. All the friends—the few kind friends—I have made will forsake me if he finds me out and comes back to me. The selfish littleness of his nature will make him claim me, perhaps, as I have made the friends. Do you think he did see me to-night? It seemed to me all in a moment that he was all eyes, and that they were on me. But that was my fright made me fancy things, perhaps."

"You'll know, poor dear, when Miss Ray comes home. Till then we'll hope for the best," Ann said soothingly.

And presently, her hand closely clasping the hard, but true and tender hand of the old servant, the poor frightened, suffering woman fell asleep.

Her hope was fallacious; her prayer was in vain!

Mr. Archibald Campbell had hardly regained the drawing-room after seeing his suddenly-indisposed guest downstairs, when he was assailed by enquiries as to the reason of her abrupt departure.

"She looked as if she had seen a ghost," Mrs. Campbell said, addressing an audience; "and I had been taking her for Miss Ray all the evening, and when I saw her looking so ill I asked for my brother, and found she was not Miss Ray after all."

"Who was your unknown guest?" Mr. Josiah H. Whittler asked affably. "Mr. Archibald Campbell with his customary courtesy, of which I have been the unfailing object ever since I have had the pleasure of making his esteemed acquaintance, tells me that the lady was, up to the moment of her departure, extremely desirous of being introduced to me. I shall

do myself the honour of calling to enquire for her, if you will kindly favour me with her name and address."

Captain Edgencumb, who had just joined the group with Jenifer, gave the lady's name and address in perfect good faith, and Mr. Josiah H. Whittler entered it in his note-book with American care and nonchalance.

But in spite of his being such a consummate actor, more than one of his fellow-guests, whose experiences of Americans at home and abroad had been many and varied, said of him :

"Whittler's the only American out who forgets his Americanisms in moments of excitement ; his accent and English are irreproachable, when he doesn't remember that they ought not to be either."

Jenifer was not very long in following Mrs. Hatton home. The girl was neither agitated nor excited by the step she and Captain Edgencumb had taken this evening, but she was preoccupied by considerations as to whether she had done wisely and well in taking it at all. A longing to go home and tell her mother about it, and hear expressions of satisfaction, and contentment, and hope for the future, came over Jenifer, and made her singularly impatient of wasting more time at the At Home.

But before she got away she had to go through the ordeal of a formal and explanatory introduction to his sister Belle. And somehow it seemed to Jenifer, that Mrs. Campbell's manner, though it was kind and hearty, lacked the "something" which Jenifer would have best liked to feel in it.

" You will find matrimony interfere very much with your profession, or your profession with matrimony," Mrs. Campbell said outspokenly, and Captain Edgencumb, who was counting more than he knew, or would have been ready to acknowledge on Jenifer's probable success, answered sharply :

"Nonsense, Belle ; you idle women, who do nothing but potter about your home preserves and amuse yourselves, have no idea of the way in which really clever, capable women can combine two sets of duties, performing each perfectly."

"How learned Harry has become on the subject of woman's two spheres under your auspices, Miss Ray!" his sister said gaily, but, though she spoke lightly, the astute woman of the world was thinking all the time : "That girl is doing a stupid thing in

letting my brother suppose she's going to make the struggle to combine the two sets of duties. Harry's a dear old boy. She'll never be fonder of him than I am ; but she's starting by letting him expect too much of her. If she goes on at this confiding rate she'll be in a state of slavery before she's been married many years ; neither her time nor her purse will be under her own control ; her children and her art will fight for undivided possession of the former, and her husband will make her think she's defrauding him if he hasn't unlimited control over the latter. I know what the independency of a self-supporting woman means directly she becomes a wife ; but that poor girl is going into it blindfold, for Harry's no more magnanimous than the majority. Thank my lucky stars I never made a penny in my life, and so Archie never expected one of me, or grudged one to me ; but a woman who makes money for herself pawns herself by marrying, and never seems able to pay up the interest, far less to redeem herself."

Mrs. Archibald Campbell did not thus think out the subject of a money-making woman's responsibilities and difficulties without many interruptions. But these reflections on her brother's announced engagement, and on the hardihood of the extremely attractive and good-looking girl who had engaged herself to him, ran through all her other thoughts and reflections this night like a tune—like a tune of the sound of which she would most willingly have rid herself. But it haunted her, repeating itself over and over again with irritating persistency, as frivolous rhythms and airs do in feverish dreams. At last she made a final effort to get rid of the burden of anxious forethought, and believed that she had cast it from her with the words :

"Well, it's her look-out, not mine, after all, and I suppose it will be all the more comfortable for Harry if she never looks out at all. My duties are very childish according to his estimate of them ; still I shall do them all the better to-night if I don't gratuitously worry myself about my brother's affairs."

It may be recorded here that Belle Campbell knew her brother rather better than Jenifer Ray did. The sister's forebodings as to the ultimate fate of one over whom Harry had complete sway were not groundless.

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